THE GREAT YOGESWARA YAGNAVALKYA

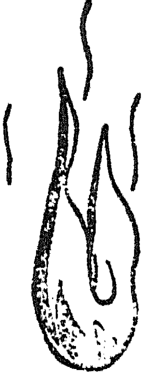


V. JALAJA SAKTHIDASAN, M.A., M.Ed.

THIS BOOK IS PUBLISHED WITH THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF **TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS** UNDER THEIR SCHEME: **"AID TO PUBLISH RELIGIOUS BOOKS".**

THE GREAT YOGESWARA YAGNAVALKYA

V. JALAJA SAKTHIDASAN, M.A., M.Ed,
Sangita Siromani,
Diploma – Kalakshehra



Published by :
Nithyananda Jothi Nilayam
Post Box No.2184.
D-3, 43 V.K.Road, Madras-28

First Edition 1991.

1000 Copies

Price : Rs. 15

Printed at:
SRI YESES PRINT HOUSE
MADRAS - 600014 Phone : 833231

Dedicated to :

All seekers of Truth;

All learners of Vedas;

All lovers of Truth;

All followers of Truth.

REFERENCE BOOKS

1. Great Women of India by
Advaita Ashram, Mayavathi.

2. The Bhagavath Gita.

3. The Saint of Sringeri by
Sri. S. Y. Krishnaswami.

4. Hinduism – K. M. Munshi.

5. Philosophical Works of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

6. Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri.

7. Mr. F. W. Max Muller.

8. Swami Madhvanandha.

9. Prof K. A. Nilakanta Sastri.

10. Dr. R. C. Mazumdar.

11. Dr. A.K. Acharya.

12. Yogeeswara Yagnavalkya by
E.R. Krishna Murthy.

THE AUTHOR SPEAKS

Years before, I witnessed a very sad incident in the life of one of my very close friends. My friend was a charming young girl of 18, very well accomplished and fairly well-to-do. A certain proposal came from Tanjore and the family was very happy, when the wedding was fixed much sooner than they expected. All were eagerly awaiting the wedding day.

But, just two days before, came an announcement in the newspapers that the wedding had been cancelled. I rushed to my friend's house and found her extremely dejected. After a lot of coaxing she burst out saying.'I wonder why I was born in this wretched sect.'

What was the wretched sect she was born in? I slowly tried to cull information of the 'so-called' wretched sect. I knew she was a brahmin. In that case, what was her sect? Why was the brahmin community fussy about sub-sects? Was it a healthy development? Being quite young, I could not as such arrive at any conclusion but I was certain that something was wrong somewhere. The sub-sect that my friend belonged to was

Sukla Yajus - also known as Katyayana Sutra. Why did the enlightened brahmin community look down upon this sect alone? I started critically examining the tenets of this sub-sect later and found that it was indeed the white yajur veda or rather the superior yajur veda. But yet, it was irony indeed that people belonging to this yajur veda, were supposed to be outcasts for their great Guru, Yogeswara Yagnavalkya, had remained a Veda Sunya for a short period. Here again, even this supposition was baseless, for the great Yogin, was never a Veda sunya-and only the 'half baked' know ledge had tried to have a sway over the prevailing ignorance.

Arriving at this conclusion, I set in to collect material from various sources; Literary and philosophical works of Mr.F.Max Muller, Swami Madhavananda, Sri Rajaji and Dr.Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Rt.Hon. Srinivasa Sastriar and also E.R.Krishnamurthi. This study threw light on the multifaceted personality Yogeswara Yagnavalkya. Yagnavalkya as pictured by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru 'was a great dynamic person-a worthy philosopher and a versatile scholar that was ever born.' But lo! It pained me much to see how this great person had

been projected by a certain class of people who had cashed on the ignorance of other people.

Hence I resolved to put in my share to educate these to whom ignorance was a bliss and to make them know about the great Saint scholar, Yagnavalkya. I appeal, to these groups therefore to know first and then criticise or even look down on their own brethren.

I am presenting this book, in a simple concise form, so that it may reach the masses. As Vivekananda once said, "Money, Money must come but what about men?" So Men and Women must come; Men and Women after realising the great magnitude of the mighty personality, Yagnavalkya must throng in millions and proudly proclaim; 'we belong to Sukla Yajur Veda' and march with raised heads. I would be most happy if this objective is achieved.

I place this before each and everyone of my readers, and request them to go through this pages with a desire to know Divinity.

Ever in the service of Truth

V. Jalaja Sakthidasan

The Great Yogeswara Yagnavalkya

Contents

I.	SUKLA YAJUR VEDA - A DEFINITION	... 11
II.	THE PRECEPTOR OF SUKLA YAJUR VEDA	... 17
III.	EARLY YEARS OF YAGNAVALKYA	... 20
IV.	VISAMPAYANA & YAGNAVALKYA	... 23
V.	YAGNAVALKYA - THE GREAT SASTRIAC SCHOLAR	... 27
VI.	THE CHALLENGE AND OUTCOME	... 33
VII.	YAGNAVALKYA LEARNS FROM SUN GOD	... 36
VIII.	YAGNAVALKYA & HIS DISCIPLES	... 41
IX.	PRATHAMA SAKA - A BRIEF DEFINITION	... 43
X.	YAGNAVALKYA AND KATYAYANI	... 47
XI.	YAGNAVALKYA AND GARGI	... 50
XII.	YAGNAVALKYA & MAITREYI	... 55
XIII.	YAGNAVALKYA & KING JANAKA	... 60
XIV.	THE PARABRAHMA TATVA EXPOUNDED	... 67
XV.	'THE IDEAL GURU"	... 70
XVI.	THE GREAT HUMANITARIAN	... 72
XVII.	THE JURIST, YAGNAVALKYA	... 74
XVIII.	YAGNAVALKYA, THE REVOLUTIONARY	... 75
XIX.	YAGNAVALKYA – THE YOGESWARA	... 78

Om

Chapter I

SUKLA YAJUR VEDA

Hinduism is based on the four vedas. These vedas are sacred, because they prescribe the code of moral conduct for each and every individual. In other words they prescribe rules and regulations for a virtuous life. But why are there four vedas? If they are aiming at one goal, will not one suffice? This is a question asked by many people. It is a fact that vedas aim at practising a life of dharma. The code of conduct prescribed by these vedas are the same, only the mode of approach is different. They emphasise the Truth: Truth in speech action and thoughts. Thus the Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana vedas insisted worship of Nature and living with nature.



Adhisankara

As Adi Sankara pointed out 'Veda derived its name from 'Vid' and it was so called because it dealt with understanding, realising and achieving divinity first by observing, then fulfilling and finally reaching the goal of realisation of the Paramatma or God.'

Rig Veda is the oldest of Vedas and it consists of hymns in praise of God.

Next comes Yajur Veda which tells us about the rituals and procedure to be adopted while performing these and how to train oneself to aspire for higher levels of Spiritualism. The former is called Karma

Kanda Whereas the latter is called Uttara Kanda or Jnana Kanda.

Sama veda is defined as

'Sama Vedad Idam githam Samjagra Pithamaha'

invoking the diety by music or Nada.

Atharvana Veda also known as Brahma Veda seeks to application of what has been acquired by learning the Thrayi vidya- that is the first three Vedas, the Rig, Yajur and Sama for materialistic prosperity and other worldly affairs.

The Rig, Yajur and Sama Vedas are known as Brihadamsaka and Atharvana Veda, Laghuvamsaka.

Vedas have been passed on to us, by oral chanting. It may be asked why these vedas were unwritten, though writing was well- known even in ancient India. The answer is simple. One has to listen to Vedic Chanting. Then he would realise that there are special stresses on some letters- and these stresses are recited with a slightly higher note. Thus while reciting vedas we find there are three notes, one basic, the lower and the other higher. These

notes are termed Dhatta, Udhatta and Anudhatta. These stresses had to be passed on only orally, just to retain precision. Hence notation was not attempted.

Saka - A definition.

These vedas, were made concise, and imparted by Gurus to their sishyas. As time passed by, Voluminous Veda, was thus made more precise and each veda, branched off into different versions. Thus these different branches of each Veda were propagated and each was called as a Saka or a branch. There were only minor differences in these. These had only one aim before them, namely realising the Almighty: Every Saka was associated with name of the sage who propagated it.

In brief each Veda had its own branches or Sakas. Though each Veda had many Sakas before, now only some of them are in use.

The Yajur Veda has two separate sections-namely the Sukla Yajur Veda and the Krishna Yajur Veda. These distinctions came

into prevalence only after the advent of Yagnavalkya.

Yajur Veda was a single entity in the beginning. It consisted of 101 Sakas but only the later 86 sakas were known, as the first 15 Sakas or Prathama or Purva Sakas were not known to human beings. Of the 86 Sakas of Krishna Yajur Veda, only 27 Sakas were taught by Vaisampayana to his disciples.

It was Yagnavalkya who learnt the first 15 Sakas from the Lord of knowledge namely Sun, and taught this to 15 disciples. Sukla Yajur veda is also called white Yajur and Krishna Yajur Veda-the Dark Yajur Veda.

Difference between Sukla Yajur veda and Krishna Yajur Veda:

Sukla Yajur veda has its Mantras and Brahmanas, distinctly marked and there is a logical sequence in prescribing the ritual: Then comes the procedure and finally intrepretation throughout the text, whereas we find that the Krishna Yajur Veda lacks this logical sequence.

Further, the Uttara Kanda finds an important place in Sukla Yajurveda. No doubt, it has been called Ekayana, as it aims at revealing the path to eternal divinity.

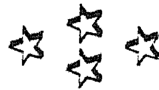
As the text, formulae etc are interpreted and there is no clear cut separation between the different sections, Krishna Yajur Veda has been called Black or Dark Yajur Veda.

Further more, the Sukla Yajur Veda Saka followers adhere to the Katyayana Sutra.

To quote Max Muller:

"The Black or Dark Yajur Veda which was the name given Taittriya samhita because in this the separation between the Mantra and Brahmana portions is obscured and the two are blended together". *

We have given a brief definition of Sukla Yajur Veda and it is left to the reader to know more about this Suddha Yajur Veda.



* History of Ancient Sanskrit literature by Max Muller-Page 180.

Chapter II

THE PRECEPTOR OF SUKLA YAJUR VEDA

Yajur Veda comprises of all rules and regulations for performing Yagnas. Of the sakas belonging to Yajur Veda, the first fifteen Sakas, had not yet been propagated to Yajur Vedins. These fifteen Sakas had therefore to wait for a preceptor who would learn and propagate this white Yajur Veda. This was no easy a task as the white Yajur Veda remained with the celestial beings and it could be learnt only by a great dynamic personality, who had already mastered other vedas perfectly well and could tune himself to the velocity of nature, and cull out details by his superior intelligence.

Demanding such high requisites, India had to wait for a great sage; A sage who would rise to be a Yogin and finally a Yogeeswara by his supreme knowledge. Patience was well rewarded when a son was born to a great vedic scholar, Brahma Ratha and his wife Sunanda. This child

was distinctly different from others, in radiating a light around himself soon after his birth. Brahma Ratha was an adept in performing Yagnas, and imparting knowledge of the Parabrahma-through Vedic teaching, and was famous for feeding the poor and the needy without any break. So, the preceptor was born in a learned family of good reputation for his mother Sunanda, was the daughter of sakala a sage in Vardamanapura.

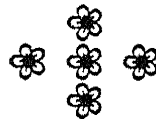
The environmental background provided the necessary intellectual training for the preceptor even before his birth.

Thus the preceptor of Sukla Yajur Veda, Sri Yagnavalkya was born on the twelfth day-Shukla Paksha Suddha Dwadesi Thithi in the month of Karthiga. The star in which he was born was Sathaya. Being the product, of Brahma Ratha's penance, he was endowed with extra-ordinary intellectual capacity to grasp even the most intricate subject with great ease and precision. Brahma Ratha named his son, Sanantha-the maharishis named him more appropriately as Yagna Valkya i.e. A person who was to establish the efficacy

of vedas by reciting them with greatest accuracy.

The boy was first initiated into learning the rudiments by the most befitting Guru at the age of five. Upanayana was performed when he was seven. After Upanayana Yagnavalkya was to pursue learning and practise Brahmhacharya* as prescribed by Vedas. His father therefore intended to send him to Chamathkarapura with his sane advice not merely suitable to those times but for ever.

What was this advice? To sum up: He asked his son to be observant and listen attentively and to follow the instruction given, to the letter. He cautioned the son never to compromise or deviate from the path of Virtue and to bear the torch of Truth and Justice always and at all costs: He inculcated in the young Yagnavalkya the thirst for knowledge and critical analysis of any subject taught, apart from sticking to high principles, and simple living and obedience to his own Guru.



* initiating him to understand the Brahman.

Chapter III

EARLY YEARS OF YAGNÀVALKYA

Yagnavalkya's father Brahmaratha wanted his son to learn all the four vedas and become a chathurvedi. Chamathkarapura was the place where the sage Bashkala lived. Bashkala was an authority on Rig Veda. Yagnavalkya became a sishya of Bashkala to become proficient in Rig veda and its allied Sastras.

His Guru for Sama Veda was Jaimini Rishi. He received instruction about Atharvana Veda from Aruni Rishi. All these three Gurus, were scholars of rare distinction in their respective vedas. Yagnavalkya received advanced training in these vedas from Veda Vyasa himself.

Vaisampayana, was a direct disciple of Veda Vyasa and had specialised in Yajur Veda. Vaisampayana was the maternal uncle of Yagnavalkya. Vaisampayana was a teacher of repute and was also known as Vidagdha Sakalya. Vaisampayana took his nephew, who was already an adept in the Rig, Sama and Atharvana Vedas, as his

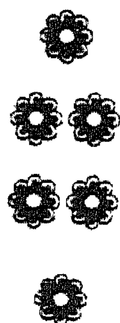
Sishya. So Yagnavalkya started learning Yajur Veda in the Gurukula conducted by his uncle, Vaisampayana. Vaisampaya's Gurukula had 365 pupils.

But, Yagnavalkya made his mark as an excellent and quick learner and one with a clarity of thought, action and deed. His analytical brain, went in for the critical study of subjects. This was a great asset to the scholar student. Yagnavalkya attained proficiency in Yajur Veda and was considered to be easily the best of all students there. In due course, Yagnavalkya became the right hand of his Guru, who at first appreciated his mastery of Yajur Veda and also his methodical and rational approach on performing Yagnas.

But however, difference of opinion crept in. Minor differences in practice and procedure of Yagnas, created a little ill - feeling in the Guru towards his nephew. Added to this, Yagnavalkya's action of justifying his deviation from the existing procedure by quoting relevant portions from Veda was misunderstood, and the Rishi felt that the Sishya was overriding him. Yagnavalkya's majestic handsome appearance and his

general behaviour was misconstrued to be one of haughtiness and pride; at times mounting even to scant respect by his Guru.

Thus, a rift arose between the teacher and the taught. The rift changed into jealousy, which later turned into a blessing. The glory of Vedas were enhanced to unexpected heights by this.



Chapter IV

VAISAMPAYANA & YAGNAVALKYA

Veda Vyasa, entrusted the work of propagating and spreading the Vedas to his direct disciples namely Bhaskala, Jaimini, Vaisampayana and Aruni. All these sages conducted adhyayana of their respective Vedas to Sishyas from Naimisaranya. Now, the sages wanted to assess their work and so they decided that they should all meet at an assembly at Mount Meru and evaluate their progress. There was also provision to acclaim the proficiency of the best Sishyas. Further the Rishis decreed that Brahmahatya dosha will befall the senior Maharishis who abstained from the Meet. The defaulter will become the victim of the dosha, within seven days.

The Meru Meet was summoned. Senior rishis, vedic scholars and eminent exponents of Sástras assembled at Mount Meru. Vaisampayana was the only person who abstained away from the meet. He did so, because he felt that the presence of Yagnavalkya in the Meet, would affect him

adversely. Even more than that, he did not want to join with others in acclaiming the proficiency of Yagnavalkya. Discussions on difficult Metaphysical areas took place. Yagnavalkya easily established himself as a great wise philosopher and an erudite scholar of great clarity. His musical voice and dignified bearing impressed one and all. Vaisampayana's absence was noted and the original decree of the Maharishis was soon to befall upon him



Vaisampayana angry with the crawling child.

The dosha descended on him. Vaisampayana was teaching his pupils when a child crawled between the teacher and the taught. This was not acceptable

during Veda classes. The Guru admonished the child. The child refused to move. Finally, Vaisampayana took a bundle of reeds-Darba and hit the child. The child fell dead. Immediately, the crime or murder befell on him. His appearance changed.

Prayachita

Now Vaisampayana called all the pupils, except Yagnavalkya and asked them to perform the Charakdwara Vrata in order to get over this heinous sin. The pupils tried but failed to achieve the desired effect. They, however, found a means of saving themselves, by telling their Guru, that it was not right to save a woeful sinner from the ill-effects of his deed.

Yagnavalkya & Vaisampayana

Yagnavalkya had mastered Atharva Veda and had attained precise knowledge of performing Santhis for certain doshas. When other disciples left the Guru on the lurch, Yagnavalkya came in. He offered to perform the requisite rites and remove the sin that had befallen his Guru. Vaisampayana remained cold, even after

Yagnavalkya, freed him from the dosha. The Guru did not want Yagnavalkya to steal away all the laurels of his relief and pretended that he was still in misery.

As per the instructions of the Guru, the other disciples performed the Charaka Vrata and the Guru now acclaimed that he had got relief only after their Charaka Vrata. He derived a cruel joy at snubbing Yagnavalkya before others and insulting his highly proficienct scholar pupil, when and where opportunities arose.

The cleavage grew to unexpected dimensions-Guru's jealousy and contempt to Yagnavalkya took a final shape later.







Chapter V

YAGNAVALKYA – THE GREAT SASTRIAC SCHOLAR

King Supriya was the ruler of the Vardhamanapura. He belonged to the solar dynasty. Vaisampayana was the Raja guru and purohit of this king. The king liberally donated to the Gurukula and was the sole benefactor of Vaisampayana's Vedic centre.

King Supriya led an immoral life. He was afflicted by leprosy. Medicines proved ineffective and the disease became worser day by day. The king then requested Vaisampayana to perform religious rites so that he may be cured of the disease. Sakalya promised to cure the king by performing Santhis. Though the Santhikams were performed regularly in the palace, they failed to give any relief to him. However, he was convinced by the Raja Guru that cure will be certain after a little more rigorous santhikam. The king also requested Vaisampayana to carry on the rites in his ashrama itself. It was decided that the prasadam consisting of mantrashadas and theertha should be

sent to the king after the Puja through a disciple.

Vaisampayana had by now cultivated the greatest dislike to Yagnavalkya. So he requested the other pupils to prove their capacity by performing the Santhikam. He also subtly insinuated them against Yagnavalkya. The rites were performed daily: but the agony of the disease aggravated. All the sishyas except Yagnavalkya had performed the parigara, but all in vain.

Vaisampayana summons Yagnavalkya

Now, Vaisampayana finding all his efforts proving futile resorted to call Yagnavalkya to perform the Santhikam. Yagnavalkya, though reluctant, yielded and performed the Santhi. He laid the condition to his Guru that the Santhikam will be performed only once.

The insistence of the Guru to help the immoral king, had made the sishya doubt the moral standards of the Guru. He wondered why his Guru, who preached Brahma Jnana should give in, to protect and shield

a person, who was facing consequences of his misdeeds.

Having agreed to perform the rite, he carried on the same in the most befitting and rigorous manner. After the Santhikam, Yagnavalkya proceeded to the palace with the prasada-to be offered to the king.

Here misfortune waved his hand over the king. The king lost faith in Santhikam and prepared to resign himself to his fate. Just then, Yagnavalkya came into the presence of the king. Yagnavalkya's personality and his dress misled the disappointed and disgusted king. The king insulted the Veda Vidyarthi and declined to accept the prasada. Yagnavalkya's pleading only made the latter, more stubborn. The ruler asked Yagnavalkya to prove the efficacy of the prasadam by throwing it on withered, dry wooden pillars of the horse stable.

Miracle

Yagnavalkya tried to convince the king, but all in vain, He resented the arrogance of the King. He sprinkled the

theertha and mantrashada reciting the requisite mantra.

Oh! what a miracle ! Everyone was thunderstuck to see the logs spring to life-blooming with flowers. The king repented over his folly. He yearned to receive prasadam from Yagnavalkya.

He sent his minister to Vaisampayana, requesting that his Sishya Yagnavalkya should perform the Santhikam once again and present the king with the prasadam. Vaisampayana conceded to the request of the King. He directed Yagnavalkya to perform the Santhikam again. Yagnavalkya, refused saying that he could not go against sastras, already taught by his Guru and his father. He was determined not to go to the palace again. Vaisampayana full of anger challenged to cure the disease by performing the Santhikam with other pupils. Supriya tested the efficacy of the Prasadam brought by Prachuda, a favourite pupil of Vaisampayana. The log did not change.

The king humbly requested Vaisampayana to send Yagnavalkya. The Guru called his disciple; Tried to convince

him how important it was to bend before him-for their future prosperity. He tried to stress that the disciple must follow the footsteps of the Guru at all costs. Yagnavalkya reminded him of the condition he laid before. But Sakalya insisted. Yagnavalkya now hit the ball. He said that he regarded self-respect more than anything else. Besides, the Sastras stated that one should leave his own preceptor, in case he preached adharma.

There was a heated argument between Sakalya and Yagnavalkya. The Guru stooped down to the level of demanding the emission of the Yajur Veda taught by him to Yagnavalkya.

What did Yagnavalkya do? How did he face the challenge?

?

Chapter VI

THE CHALLENGE AND THE OUTCOME

Soon after, Vaisampayan's challenge, Yagnavalkya accepted the same. By his great Yogic powers he gave the 27 Sakas learnt from Sakalya, a form and spit them out. The Sakas for which the diety was agni, caught fire as soon as they were spit out and the whole world got enveloped in this Vedic fire. Vaisampayana never expected this and was bewildered.

Providentially, Veda Vyasa was returning from Kasi. He came to know about the ruin that wrath and revenge had brought upon themselves. As the legend goes some of the sishyas of Vaisampayana were changed into ostriches in order to lap the vedic fire.

The incident was however misconstrued and Yagnavalkya has been stamped 'Jnana sunya' for a short period. This is utterly wrong. It was only the 27 sakas that were learnt from Vaisampayana that were given out by Yagnavalkya. The 59 sakas taught by

Veda Vyasa were still in the possession of Yagnavalkya. Apart from this, the Rig, Sama and Atharvana Vedas learnt from other Gurus were retained. Hence it is most unwarranted to say that the great sage Yagnavalkya was without any Veda for a certain period and so his followers are to be treated as 'outcastes of the mid-day'

This type of thoughtless action only smacks of bad manners-and low culture among certain groups of people in some pockets of South India-especially Tamil Nadu. They have treated these followers with contempt leading to the consequence that Sukla Yajur Vedins of Tamil Nadu have tried to escape ridicule by calling themselves 'Vadamas'.The roots of this baseless ridicule can be traced to the anti-propaganda of some of the sishyas of Vaisampayana, soon after Yagnavalkya met the challenge of his former Guru.

Once Yagnavalkya disowned his Guru, the baseless rumour was spread, but fortunately it did not find roots in North India or other places. Even now we find many people belonging to the Suddha Veda spread all over the Hindu Asian coun-

tries. They take a pride in claiming themselves to be followers of the Yogeswara Yagnavalkya.

How did Yagnavalkya prove his superiority later? What is the Suddha Veda? How did Yagnavalkya acquire this superior knowledge?

Who was his preceptor now?



Yagnavalkya

Chapter VII

YAGNAVALKYA LEARNS FROM THE SUN GOD

Immediately after spitting out the Yajur Veda taught by his former Guru, Vaisampayana, Yagnavalkya proceeded to the Holy Ganges. He had a bath there and then after purification started meditating on Lord Vishnu. He recited the Gayatri Japa which he knew will protect him from malefic forces. He was aware that the Gayatri Mantra was an earnest prayer to Sun God to alleviate one from all sufferings besides blessing one and bestowing strength and knowledge. It is an invocation to the Supreme Light to drive away the encircling gloom and ignorance This in turn will lead one to get nearer to Godliness; Nearness to Divinity in its turn will make one understand the Parabrahman, namely, The ultimate goal of realising the creator and the created; The Paramatma and Jivatma Unity; Unity of that great Paramatma in the diverse Atmas will be achieved automatically. In fact Gayatri herself is an embodiment of learning. Goddess Gayathri was pleased

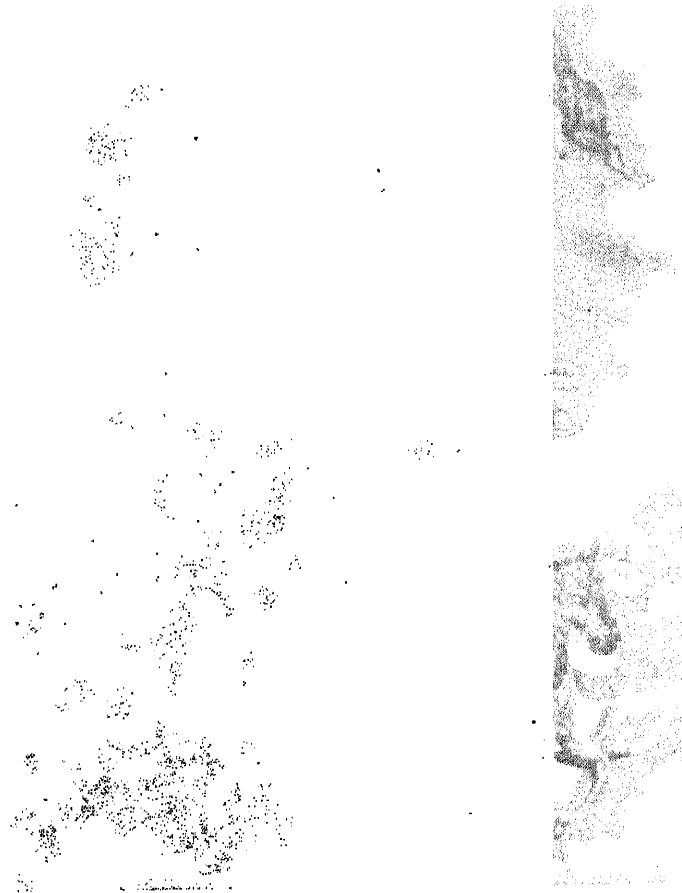
with Yagnavalkya's penance in Panchagni. She appeared before him and granted him his boon. What was the boon he asked for?



Goddess GAYATRI gives darshan to Yagnavalkya

Yagnavalkya asked the Divine mother to bless him with a proper Guru, to learn Yajur Veda. As per her suggestion, Yagnavalkya prayed to the Sun God to teach him the unknown, pure Yajur Veda.

But this was not to be achieved easily. It required great concentration and rigorous penance. Undaunted Yagnavalkya worshipped the Lord, after a ceremonial bath in the pond Visvamitra Hrada in Hatikeswara. This pond was supplicated to Divakara-namely the Sun. His penance was performed under the scorching sun, on hills with fire all round. His deep concentration and austerity rewarded him well.



The Lord of Light in the Chariot

The Sun God not only appeared before him but also offered to teach him the Sukla Yajur Veda or the Prathama Veda. But a certain condition had to be fulfilled, before the instruction could commence.

Yagnavalkya had to keep pace with the very fast moving Sun God. Could this be possible for a human being? The Lord was kind enough to help him to solve this problem too.

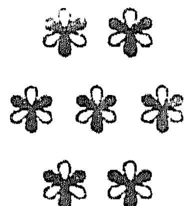
He introduced the tejas of knowledge into him. The entry of the eternal light of knowledge produced unbearable heat. Yagnavalkya had a dip in a nearby tank as instructed by Lord Surya. He also found the Soura Suktas inlaid in the tank. He set up icons of Aditya and recited them. He composed a Saraswathi Stotra also here.

In order to match with the speed of the rays of the sun, he went to get the swiftest steeds from Patabhagni. These steeds were under the control of Patabhagni and were the sons of Samgra-the consort of Sun. Patabhagni handed over the best horses and Yagnavalkya took them straight to Aditya.

Now, Yagnavalkya moved with his guru, the Divakara and learnt from him the first fifteen Sakas of Yajur Veda. In fact, Lord Surya taught him several Vedic secrets and allied sastras. Yagnavalkya was the second direct disciple of Lord Surya, after Ambhini, the diety disciple of Sun.

Thus steady, severe and single concentration on the Paramatma gave to the Sadhaka Ayathama Yajur Veda consisting of both Karma Kanda and the Jnana Kanda of Vedas; Of course with greater emphasis on Jnana Kanda.

It was thus, therefore the Vedic world was enriched by the Sukla Yajur Veda by Yagnavalkya, the great Sage, Philosopher and Yogi.



Chapter VIII

YAGNAVALKYA AND HIS DISCIPLES

After adhyayana of Sukla Yajur Veda from Surya Bhagawan, Yagnavalkya settled down on the banks of Gautami river. Gautami River is now known as Godavari. It was from here that Suddha yajusha spread to other places. Yagnavalkya's ashrama was a beehive of activity

Sukla Yajur Veda was taught by Yagnavalkya to many disciples. Of these Kanva, Madhyandina, Jabali, Boudhie Sapeya, Galava, Markandeya are well known for their scholarship. Each disciple specialised in a particular Saka, and this in turn derived the name of the specialist sage

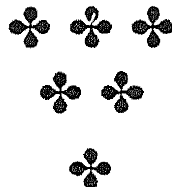
The banks of Godavari sounded and resounded with Veda Mantras and Chantings. The entire atmosphere had a serene, calm, and pristine air. Discussions on intricate metaphysical problems filled the ashrama with Divinity and Vedic Culture. Many Maharishis came there to hear

the enchanting, soul stirring recitation of the Ayathayama Veda. Some of them settled down there.

Later, the place was renowned for its various homas, Yagnas performed for the well-being of the entire universe and man. May be, Godavari became extremely holy, because of the preaching of Sukla Yajur Veda from her banks!

Recognition and reverence came from every nook and corner. Eminent kings, and Janaka, the king of Mithila; was one of Yagnanvalkya's disciples.

Kanva after Mastering the entire Sukla Yajur Veda, spread the Veda through his disciples. Kanva was the Prathama Sishya of Yagnavalkya. Hence Sukla Yajur Veda followers derive the name of Kanva Sakhins after Kanva Maharishi, a great exponent of the Sukla Yajur Veda. Kanva is also the famous propagator of Kanva Samhita.



Chapter IX

PRATHAMA SAKA - A BRIEF DEFINITION

Sukla Yajur Veda is also called the Prathama Saka. Prathama means first and foremost. History shows that the Krishna Yajur Veda is older and remained in practice even before the White Yajur Veda was propagated. In that case, is it correct to call a veda of later origin as Prathama or Purva Saka?

This question has been asked by many rationalists and it cannot be denied that it is a pertinent question too. An insight into Vedas, especially Yajur Veda will provide one with the most relevant and appropriate answer. One need not forget that during the time of deluge everything was washed off. Worldly things disappeared and only reality remained. Anitya vanished and Nitya remained. How? The Rishis who had learnt the Vedas, passed it on to the succeeding generations. Some of these were fortunate enough to live through the Pralaya to pass on the torch of Vedas to future time.

The destruction brought by the fury of nature, enveloped all the existent Vedas but Vedas lived still and took roots again after nature's fury had abated.

As it has already been seen, only 86 sakas of the Dark Yajur Veda faced all the turmoil of nature. But, later they came out with redoubled vigour, because they were eternal truth, founded on the basis of experience and reason. What then about the other Sakas of Yajur Veda?

These first Sakas, were not yet known to the human race and hence they were protected against Nature's fury. These Sakas being in the possession of the Lord of Light did not suffer the onslaughts of Nature. A Supreme power had protected these 15 sakas and there was no question of extinction for them. They were preached to human beings only later. Yet they got the name 'Prathama Saka' because these fifteen Sakas of Sukla Yajur Veda, were the first or Prathama or Purva Sakas of the Suddha Veda.

Further more than this, these sakas, were called Prathama as they were preached by Kanva Maharishi who was the Prathama

Sishya of Yogeswara Yagnavalkya. Whereas epic tells us that other vedas were stolen by Asura Samaka and later recovered by Mahavishnu, Sukla Yajur Veda was never stolen as it was in the possession of most Supreme Lord of the universe. This veda was learnt but not spit out. Hence it came to be called the Ayathayama Veda.

It is Suddha Veda as it was acquired through pure penance from the pure single source of energy, namely the Sun.

The presence of Uttara Mimamsa or Jnana Kanda, in the Sukla YajurVeda, leads to Self-realisation and the ultimate goal of complete salvation. This has attributed the name Ekayana Veda to Sukla Yajur Veda.

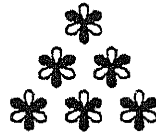
These are the views of not only many Eastern philosophers but of renowned Western Scholars also.

The Sukla Yajur Veda has at present followers of two Sakhas, namely kanva and Madhyandina Sakhas. These sakhas derive their respective names from Maharishi Kanva and Madhyandina. It will be interesting to note that Sri Sureeswaracharya, the first Peetadhipati of Sringeri Peeta, was a Sukla Yajur Vedi.

The Sukla Yajur Veda is a quintessence of Advaita Philosophy. To be more precise, it is the forerunner of Advaita Philosophy as it has its Mahavakya.'Aham Brahmasmi' Brahma resides in me.

To sum up, Sukla Yajur Veda or Prathama Sakha believed and practised the principle tenet of Vedic Philosophy namely 'God lives in his creations; Creations are the various manifestations of God; God lives in each and every one and each person is an entity of the Almighty himself.'*

We can know more about Sukla Yajur Veda from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and katyayana's Anukramanika, apart from his other valuable works on the subject. Kanva Satapatha and Bashyas to Brihadaranyaka Upanishads by Adi Sankara, the exponent of Advaita Philosophy and the treatise of Holy Vidyaranya, in addition to Isavasya Upanishad will enlighten the reader more about the PRATHAMA SAKA.



* Bhagavatha.

Chapter X

YAGNAVALKYA AND KATYAYANI

Sage Katyayana lived in a hermitage near Mithila. He was also known as Katya. Maharishi Katyayana had heard about Yagnavalkya and had a very good impression of his great learning; When he had heard how Yagnavalkya had been instructed by the Sun God, his admiration became greater.

Sage Katya had a daughter named Katyayani. This maiden was highly accomplished and beautiful. In fact, she was a personification of modesty and virtue. Katya wished to find a suitable match for his daughter. He wanted his son-in-law to be a great vedantin, and a practical philosopher. He secretly longed that Yagnavalkya should be his son-in-law. But the question was, how could he propose his daughter to the highly reputed, dynamic scholar, Yagnavalkya? What would be the response of the multi-dimensional personality to the proposal?

'Marriages are made in heaven' is a saying. In the case of Katyayani destiny

had already fixed Yagnavalkya as her bridegroom. For, if it had not been so, would the great sage agree to the match immediately after the proposal by Katyayana?

Katyayani was married to Yagnavalkya, on an auspicious day. She proved to be a dutiful wife, a real guide and a good mother, who aided the husband to pursue his own field without any interruption.

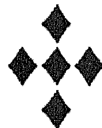
Katyayani had four sons. Each one vied the other in his Vedic accomplishments. Reputed scholars like Katyayana, Chandrakanta, Mahameha and Vijaya are still remembered today, after thousands of years, as sons of Katyayani and Yogeswara.

Katyayani is also to be remembered not as a mere domestic companion but a philosopher who learnt about self and universal self at the feet of that great Jnani Yagnavalkya. It was through her that Yagnavalkya preached the philosophy of the undivided Atma and the Paramathma, the Universal soul. He distinguished clearly that Atma was eternal. Self was manifest not only in human beings, but also in immovable achethna things. The binding string

of the cosmos, was the eternal universal controlling and balancing power, the Paramathma. Experiences add to self-realisation. Recognition of the Omniscient in every object aids to one's realisation of the unlimited potentialities of that Parabhraman who is in us and other things as well.

A more appreciable point about Katyayani is her broad mindedness to share her sole companion Yagnavalkya, with an equally beautiful but slightly younger spinster, Maitreyi, for the purpose of learning. It is certain that no other wife, would accept and allow her husband to remarry - even if she did not live with him happily!

We see the magnitude of this great unassuming lady, in the heights of the glory of her husband Yagnavalkya.



Chapter XI

YAGNAVALKYA AND GARGI

Gargi's name is mentioned in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as a scholar, and as one of the women seekers of Truth. Gargi was a contemporary of Yagnavalkya, and was a versatile scholar and highly proficient in Logic. She was the daughter of Vachaknu and hence was known as Gargi Vachaknavi.

The spinster Vedantin had acquired mastery over Sastras as well. She had come to King Janaka's court for his Yaga and had questioned Yagnavalkya about matter. She started with elements which caused the formation of the Universe; The various planes that man has to pass through to achieve understanding of the all pervading soul.'This requires a lot of training and continuous striving on the part of man to reach the goal. Illusion will always mislead the striving soul; distractions will be many in the path. More than that, dejection and frustration will confront the person. But, if the soul, realises that he is part and parcel of that great Supreme power, namely Iswara, then realisation will be possible.

Though, the power that controls all manipulations of all the creations - Yet it remains dormant. It is shapeless, formless, limitless and colourless. It is this power that initiates every action and reaction. It is the cause and effect as well.'

When the above explanation was given by Yagnavalkya as answers to her queries Gargi went a little further to enquire about Brahmaloka and the cause of Brahmaloka.

Now, Yagnavalkya reminded her that she was questioning him beyond the limits of Reason. For this being transcendental truth, it is not to be investigated without being learnt, or understood or instructed by a preceptor. Yagnavalkya also condemned her for transgressing her limits and questioning about the cause of Mula Prakrithi, which was beyond the sphere of mere reason and logic. What if, if she still persisted on parleying such questions?

Exclaimed the Yogin, 'Ask not too much, Gargi, so that thy head may not fall off the body. Truly concerning Divinity one must not ask too much. Thou dost ask too much Gargi, ask not too much!'

Gargi became silent but however she was not subdued.*

She got up once again and sought the assembly of sages permission to ask Yagnavalkya two more questions. This indeed was the metal of that Vedantin who could challenge the great sage Yagnavalkya in discussing with equal vigour and clarity, Vedic philosophy. The assembly of sages, approved. Gargi now started in a tone of full confidence with the main intention of making the exponent of Sukla Yajur Veda to accept defeat.

She asked Yagnavalkya about Maya - or ethereal expanse. In other words, illusion that covers reality.

Her second question was more crucial and serious. She harped on Brahman again, but the wording of the question was different. The answer for this was Nirguna Brahman. But it was against convention to discuss openly about this immutable Brahman.

How did Yagnavalkya establish his supremacy? He now resorted to what Brahma

---

* Page 138 - Great women of India - published by Advaita Ashrama, Mavavati, Himalayas.

Jnanis called as Akshara or the eternal. This Akshara is nothing which motivates everything. This Akshara again is formless and shapeless - but creates multifarious forms and shapes in the Universe. It does not move, but it is responsible for all movements of everything. Hunger, pain, sorrow, joy or any other experience is given only by that Akshara - which is in no way connected to anyone of these. Akshara is limitless; timeless and spaceless. It is everywhere and nowhere too. Understanding this Akshara, is the basis of all self-realisation. When the first is lacking, any amount of sacrifice, or any number of homas or Yagnas will not be fruitful at all. Akshara is invisible but it exists everywhere.

If one should know this Akshara, one should get detached, and adhere strictly to listen attentively, contemplate on the Omnipotent and meditate endlessly.**

The debate between Yagnavalkya and Gargi was one of high calibre, making the unknown, known. In fact, it is Brahma Tatva which is the origin of Tarka Sastra.

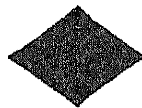
** The same views in Aksnarabrahma Yoga - of Bhagavath Gita Slokas 9 onwards.

Gargi now proclaimed that Yagnavalkya was an unrivalled, matchless vedantin. His enunciation of Brahman, step by step widened the spiritual vision of those around. Thus Yagnavalkya was considered most supreme and unequalled exponent of Brahmavidya. She said that none need ask the sage any more question, for he had already established that he was Brahmista.

She asked the assembly to bend before Supreme knowledge, and get the benign blessings of the Yogi.

No doubt, that the fair one, who passed the verdict that Yagnavalkya was the greatest scholar of the time, finds place in the list of great vedic teachers to whom tribute of respect had to be paid at the time of Brahmayajna.*

She was the deciding factor in Yagnavalkya getting the 1000 cows from Janaka.



* Aswatayana Grihya Sutram 31, 44.

Chapter XII

YAGNAVALKYA AND MAITREYI

Mitra, a Vedic scholar, was the minister of king Janaka. His highly accomplished daughter Maitreyi was brought up by Gargi, her maternal aunt. Maitreyi's association with her vedic scholar Brahmavadhini aunt Gargi, served as an impetus to think deeply about various philosophical aspects. She was well-versed in vedas and Sastras. She aspired for attaining more and more of philosophical knowledge and to acquire a deep insight into reality.

Maitreyi had been present during the Yagna performed by Yagnavalkya at the request of king Janaka. She had been greatly impressed in the manner in which Yagnavalkya vanquished his opponents and established himself as the 'greatest Yogi'.

She, therefore, desired to learn more and more of Vedas from Yagnavalkya himself. But how could this be done? She was a spinster of eighteen. Yagnavalkya was already a married man. How could she learn the intricate Vedas in the Ashrama of Yagnavalkya?

Maitreyi's resourceful mind found a solution to this problem also. She decided to become Yagnavalkya's second wife - for she knew that otherwise the world will not accept her presence in the Ashrama.

She told her aunt Gargi about her intention. In the meantime, her father Mitra also came to know about this daughter's wish. But be wondered how this could be fulfilled if Yagnavalkya's wife Katyayani did not agree to it?

As providence would have it, one day when Mitra was returning from his official duties, he found the sage in deep meditation. He was astounded to see a Tiger ready to pounce upon the meditator. Mitra killed the Tiger. Yagnavalkya was aroused from his meditation by the last growl of the dying Tiger. He thanked Mitra for saving his life and promised to fulfil one of his desires later on.

Katyayani was impressed by Maitreyi. She willingly accepted to arrange the wedding of her husband with Maitreyi. Maitreyi's quest for self-realisation won her appreciation and great admiration for the former.

Meantime, Mitra approached Yagnavalkya with his proposal. Katyayani herself supported the intellectual union of Yagnavalkya and Maitreyi.

Maitreyi was more interested in introspection.

'Who am I?'

'Why have I come into this world?'

'What happens after death?'

'What is the attachment I have to my husband and sons?'

were the questions she was asking herself always. But this did not interfere with her duties as a wife and mother. This domestic involvement was just superficial but the spiritual involvement was constant and real.

Yagnavalkya determined to become a Sanyasin later. He informed Maitreyi about his intention and told her that half of his wealth will be given to her in order to live peacefully later. Maitreyi asked Yagnavalkya a question.

'Will the wealth make her immortal? If it is to be a stumbling block to self realisation

and spiritual enlightenment, what use is it to her?'

She requested the Muni to instruct her the Atma Vidya. Now, what is Atma Vidya?

Atma Vidya is the knowledge of ever-lasting soul. It is imperishable, fire will not burn it nor can any other element destroy it. Atma is formless but takes a form during birth. The Atma is unaffected by likes, dislikes, fortunes, misfortunes etc. The Atma becomes one with the Universe when the physical form perishes.

If one must know more about the Atma, the first requisite is that, that he should get complete detachment and overcome ego!

To find the presence of the supreme being in each and everyone of his creations; to identify the presence of this unique being in diversity, and with all intensity, forms the next step in the training. This will in turn lead to seeing one's own self in all the creations of the world.

Control of senses, and ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal will aid to know the Atma sooner.

Athmavichara consists of three stages;

First and foremost, comes undistracted attentivity and listening.

The second stage is pondering over what has been seen and heard - discriminating the salient features from the rest.

The third stage of Meditation and undivided concentration will lead to realisation of the Parabrahma Swarupa.

Once this Vidya is mastered, mankind will definitely be free from materialistic obsessions and worries.

Yagnavalkya proceeded to instruct Maitreyi to tune herself to the tone of the Atma. Then rich experience and Nityananda will follow automatically in course of time.

Maitreyi followed the instructions of her Guru husband and became an ascetic. Her name is one that is found in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.





Chapter XIII

YAGNAVALKYA AND KING JANAKA

King Janaka, the king of Videha was a great philosopher himself. He was also known as a Karma Yogi as he executed his duties of kingship - without any attachment to power, wealth or his own prosperity. Hence he was called a Rajarishi. King Janaka wanted to perform the Rajasuya Yaga. He requested Sage Yagnavalkya to be in charge of the Yaga. Yagnavalkya accepted the offer and proceeded to Mithila with some eminent Maharishis and Sishyas. He was quite happy to see the arrangements made by the king for the Yaga. Seeing the gathering of reputed, eminent Maharishis participating in the Yaga, he was indeed overjoyed.

The Rajasuya Yaga was conducted in a perfect manner with Yagnavalkya as the chief priest. After the completion of the Yaga, King Janaka honoured all the scholars suitably. But, the entire Yaga could be considered complete, only after offering the Agra Pooja. Now, Janaka sought the assembly to unanimously name a scholar sage to

receive the Agra Pooja. The Maharishis remained silent and as such no suggestion was made. But Yagnavalkya proclaimed that he was the fittest person to receive the Agra Pooja which included one thousand golden cows given as dakshina.

There was approval of this, by Aswini also. So Janaka gave away the golden cows with Argyam to Sage Yagnavalkya. But now there came a vehement protest from a corner. Who protested? It was Vaisampayana. He forbade Yagnavalkya from taking the prize. Suddenly there rushed into the assembly uncouth, ugly groups of kinkaras, demanding the cows as they were lifeless. By the way, why and how did these Kinkaras come there?

On hearing the protest, Yagnavalkya recited the Yama Mantra. Yama, the Lord of Death, sent his deputies to the rescue of the Yogi. Janaka asked them to wait for a while, and called back the fleeing Vaisampayana and his followers.

He requested Vaisampayana to give life to the cows and take them away. Vaisampayana expressed his inability to do

so. Thereupon king Janaka turned to Yagnavalkya. Yagnavalkya chanted the relevant special mantras, and sprinkled the water from his Kamandala. Immediately the cows sprang to life and came to the Brahmista.

Yama Kinkaras now withdrew their claim and left the place. Humbled Vaisampayana was filled with remorse when his former disciple Yagnavalkya, bade his sishyas to lead the cows to his Ashrama.

Janaka learnt more by his association with great scholar sages. His dialogues with Yagnavalkya on Agnihotra and life after death are thought provoking.

Janaka's search for a suitable guru

In due course of time, the Rajarishi desired to be instructed by a suitable Guru. He realised that Yagnavalkya was the most befitting person but yet he wanted the concurrence of other learned sages as well. He wanted them to acknowledge the proficiency of Yagnavalkya in both Karma Kanda and Brahma Kanda. He consulted Yogi Yagnavalkya about this who also en-

dorsed his view. So Janaka planned to perform the Bahudakshina Yaga. Vedic scholars from Kuru, Panchala countries gathered at Mithila. Vaisampayana and his associates attended the Yaga mainly with the aim of defeating Yagnavalkya and humbling him. The Yaga was concluded to the entire satisfaction of the assembly of Sages.

He convened a Sadas. He told the participants that the winner would be given a big gift of one thousand high yielding Milch cows besides the twenty gold coins tied to the horns of each. The victor will be declared the greatest Brahma Jnani in the congregation of sages. The Maharishis were dumbfounded and no one of them had the confidence of calling himself a Brahma Jnani. Their courage failed at the right moment.

Yagnavalkya – The Yogeswara

Yagnavalkya now got up and claimed that he was a Brahma Jnani deserving the prize and praise, but Vaisampayana and his henchmen became wild and swore against Yagnavalkya's claim.

Now the sages wanted to put to test Yagnavalkya's knowledge. Thus Aswala, Arthabhag, Bhujyu, Ushasta, Kahola started with the volley of questions from elementary to metaphysical matters. However they were all silenced by the appropriate answers given by Yagnavalkya.

Janaka's audience was adorned by the great Brahmavadhini Gargi, who was second to none in Vedanta. She was a real challenge to Yagnavalkya and the latter's sound knowledge, easily overcame the questions of the concept of Brahma. Gargi questioned twice and finally accepted his superiority.

Gargi's acceptance threw Vaisampayana into fury. He rose up and ferociously started questioning his previous disciples endlessly - All his questions were answered. Infuriated Vaisampayana went to the low level of questioning about the authenticity of Sukla Yajur Veda.

This was not warranted and he was cursed for this. The curse befell him. He lost his life. But at King Janaka's request, Yagnavalkya restored him to life. Yagnavalkya addressed the gathering of

eminent scholars and cleared their doubts about the Creator, by a simple parable. The entire assembly being fully convinced of Yagnavalkya's Brahma Jnana unanimously declared that Yagnavalkya had the exclusive right to claim the gift of cows namely the Bahudhakshina.

The Rajarishi honoured Yagnavalkya and the sages assembly declared that he was a Yogeswara - namely the greatest of Yogis.

Yagnavalkya became the Guru of the Rajarishi and instructed him in Brahma Vidya and other fields like politics - Yagnavalkya cleared all the doubts of Janaka during instruction to the latter in due course.







Chapter XIV

Parabrahma Tatva Expounded

Yagnavalkya was endowed with a special faculty of making even a layman understand the most difficult branch of Philosophy by means of simple parables.

Being a born preacher he once addressed a gathering of eminent Vedantins. This simple Comparison of Man and a forest tree is an eye opener to many on the Creator, creations and the ultimate

The audience was dumbfounded when the Yogeswara likened a man to a tree. The man, is made of skin and bones; The skin has its two layers Epidermis, the outer layer of the skin and inner layer called Dermis. The outer layer is covered with tiny pores-of hair. Below the inner layer there are the muscles and the bones. His limbs, Trunk, Chest and Eyes form the other parts of the body.

A large forest tree is similar to a man in many aspects. The tree has its roots which are deep down the earth. It has its trunk. Then comes the branches, with its leaves.

Finally there are blossoms and fruits which are products of the tree.

Now, though the tree is immovable, it retains its balance depending on the strength of its roots. This makes it immovable. But in the case of man, the firm grip his foot and legs have over the ground with its gravitation makes him stand erect just like the tree. He moves, because of the control he has over his legs and feet. This is the only difference between him and the tree. The tree's trunk is similar to the trunk of man. The branches to his limbs; Nature has endowed the tree with certain special characteristics to withstand calamities caused by the fury of Nature.

If the man is hurt on the skin, blood oozes out. If the wound is deeper, the muscles and at times even the bones are also visible. So also, if the bark of the tree, is cut slightly, gum oozes out. If we split it further the inner bark is visible. If we still fell the tree deeper and deeper, we find the tough, inner most centre or core.

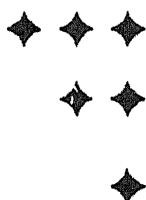
The other similarity between these is that the inner bark resembeles the human skeleton and nervous system attached to

this. The human hair is similar to leaves of the tree. Both are dispensable. If a tree is cut without injuring its other vital sections it may spring up again; It may grow sooner and fresher than before. But what about man?

If his life is cut short by death can he spring up like the prooned tree? This is not correct.

The Atma or the subtle body which is eternal takes a new physical form based on its previous deeds, as per the law of Universe. The entire Universe with all its creations, animate and inanimate are controlled by that supreme power, called Brahma. This is the Iswara Tatva - or complete knowledge of the Para Brahma

This is just a simple sample. A deep study of the Yogeswara's life will reveal many more simple commonplace metaphors and similies projecting the born preacher in all his glory.



Chapter XV

'The Ideal Guru'

The propagator of the Prathama Saka had suffered much humiliation in the ashrama of Vaisampayana. This had proved to be blessing in disguise. Though, it is usual for anyone to pass on this hurt on his disciples, Yogeswara was an exemption to this. To substantiate, we give you an anecdote, which reveals the Guru, as a man of principles and high ideals. Thus he proved to be 'An Ideal Guru' It has already been narrated how KIng Janaka became a disciple of Yagnavalkya and learnt about Agnihotra, Brahmaloka and other intricate philosophical details. King Janaka ruled Videha, dedicating his duties of Kingship to God, In fact, he was a 'Sthitaprajna'. He carried on his duty, never desiring for fruits of his labour. Thus, he was much above many other rulers of his times. His detached action won him the much coveted title of Rajarishi.

Yagnavalkya recognised the high Vedantic standard of the practical philosopher King. But, somehow his other disciples

felt that their Guru was bestowing special attention on Janaka, because of his position and prosperity.

Yagnavalkya was aware of this prevailing discontent among his disciples. One day, there was a sudden fire in the city of Videha, when the Guru was explaining intricate philosophical details to the king. Janaka was least perturbed and his attention was not diverted at all. He remained in his seat, least concerned about the raging flame consuming his city, whereas other disciples rushed out, to save their belongings.

But they were astonished to find there was no fire at all, and realised that they had been disillusioned. Yagnavalkya now, made them realise that their opinion about King Janaka was biased and baseless. They were surprised to know that their Guru had created the illusion of fire by his Yogic powers, just to expose their ignorance in contrast to the steadfastness of purpose of the renowned King.

In appreciation of this Yagnavalkya presented him with a Gold ring of exquisite workmanship and divinity.

Chapter XVI

Yagnavalkya - the Great Humanitarian

The Great Yogin, was also a Humanist. He felt that every individual had his obligations to society, The society consisted of Man his kith and kin, Guru and God. The Yogin added one more dimension to these obligations of man; that is the state.

These obligations demand man to perform his duties first to the creator-by offering thanks-for all benefits he has received.

He is duty bound to his parents, and is obliged to them for his existence and enjoyment of pleasures and adjusting to the challenging world. He is bound to be affectionate and kind to them for this, and the ancestors also.

Next, he is indebted to those, who initiated him in learning, and taught him to pursue the path of righteousness in his life. This duty, consists of paying respects to his Gurus and following their footsteps with all earnestness.

The fourth obligation man owes to society in which he is a part and parcel. The society is responsible for the safety of his person and property. The individual has to pay for these previleges enjoyed by setting a part of his wealth to the state - to be spent for providing shelter to the needy and the deserving besides feeding the hungry stomachs.

Is not this a mark of the Great Humanitarian philosopher?



Chapter XVII

The Jurist, Yagnavalkya

It appears since early times, the Yagnavalkya school was more favourably inclined to recognise women's right than the other schools of jurists.

Widows without issues, in days of yore were denied claim to family estate or property. Only a small fraction of the wealth of the deceased husband, was allotted to widow as maintenance. Even this, was at the discretion of the dominant male of the family.

But, Yagnavalkya championed the cause of widow's right to inheritance after Vishnu.

This was indeed a revolutionary step which adversely affected many vested interests and more so the state.

But, however, Yagnavalkya's authority was relied upon by the British Courts, when they recognised the right of widows to claim and inherit the property of the husband.

Chapter XVIII

Yagnavalkya, the Revolutionary

Women of the Upanishad days had freedom to remain spinsters or get into wedlock.

But marriages were classified into 8 types.

1) Brahma form-Marrying a daughter to a learned suitable groom befitting, the girl's family.
2) Daiva Form of Marriage; Marrying the daughter with Gifts to a priest.
3) Arsha Form of Marriage: Marrying the daughter to a bridegroom who gives one or two pairs of cows in exchange to the bride.
4) Prapatya Form: This is also known as 'Kayah' form of marriage. The father marries the daughter to a youth requesting her hand and the parents bless them
5) Asura form of Marriage: The bridegroom gives wealth to the bride kinsmen after choosing his own bride.

6) Gandharva form of Marriage: This can be briefly described as a love match.

7) Rakhshasa Form of Marriage - The bride is abducted by the youth, even if she protests and then married by him.

8) Paisacha Form of Marriage:

Here a young man secretly seduces a girl while asleep-and finally marries her.

All these types were considered legal: and there was no controversy after the wedding was over.

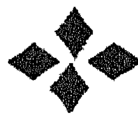
But when things took a bad shape, the revolutionary Yogeswara championed divorce by woman. He laid down the following Conditions for getting Divorce:

1) If the husband was immoral
2) He had been away from the wife for a very long period.
3) He betrayed the state.
4) He was impotent.
5) He was a fraud.
6) If he posed to be a danger to the wife's life.

7) If he was dead-she could remarry.

He prescribed the periods of absence of the husband-based on the purpose of tour- and decided the minimum and maximum limit of absence from her to range from three years to eight years.

The fact that the wife was also given the right to divorce was indeed a sign of the revolutionary Character of Yagnavalkya.



Chapter XIX

YAGNAVALKYA THE YOGESWARA

Yagnavalkya continued propagating the Sukla Yajur Veda through his fifteen disciples for quite a long time. His Smrithi is the rocky foundation of Hindu law and jurisprudence. He was a great thinker and we owe many of the valuable vedic works to the Yogeswara.

To understand the magnitude of this great personality, one should endeavour to assess his contribution to the unification of code of religion and conduct. As a man, with very great capacity and keen intellect, his life was one of challenge and challenge alone. The ridicule he faced at Vaisampayana's ashrama speaks volumes of his capacity and also presence of mind in tackling unforeseen problems. He struggled hard at each and every step, when half - baked knowledge put a check in his progress. But each challenge, emboldened him more and more to the extent of his renouncing his Guru, for upholding truth. Circum- stances presented themselves in various

types like demanding the letting out of knowledge acquired.

But this proved more advantageous, for if it had not been so, we would not have known the Sukla Yajur Veda or the Brahma Kanda at all. Yagnavalkya got recognition only in adversity. He outwitted his opponents by analytical and logical arguments based on Sukla Yajur Veda. Unlike Vaisampayana he appreciated the achievements of his own sishyas - encouraging them to serve humanity by prescribing moral codes of conduct. It may be said that Yagnavalkya at times, during contests, hurled curses on his opponents. But, the fact that these curses, were also later redeemed and retrieved by him, demands our appreciation.

The Suddha Veda, often had to face abuse and its authenticity was also questioned. But the existence of the Veda in spite of all this controversy is a testimony of its strength, validity and eternity. Even after establishing the ashrama, Yagnavalkya had to fight for his cause incessantly, till he was finally acclaimed 'The Yogeswara' by the learned sages of the day.

Perhaps, Yogeswara was one of the very few persons who instructed persons of the fair sex, Atma Vidya. Though much is spoken of women's emancipation and equal rights today, Yet it is most unfortunate that orthodoxy is reluctant to let them study Vedas. But Yagnavalkya was indeed a great revolutionary in teaching Atma Vidya besides allowing Maitreyi to become an Ascetic. He was a stalwart of women's rights.

He was in the zenith of glory, when he sought to renounce the world completely. He took to Sanyasa. He underwent all the four ashramas prescribed by the Sastras.

In fact, many readers of Bhagavad Gita will find similar views expressed in Sukla Yajur Veda. The life of a saint is not merely to be read; but to be followed. Their struggle to prominence is a beacon light to us beckoning us ' to strive, struggle and stop not, till the goal is achieved.'

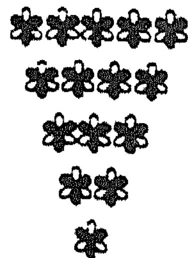
Our reverence to the Yogeswara will increase as we get a great insight into Sukla Yajur Veda.

Long live Truth;

Long live the seekers of Truth;

Long live the search for Truth and

Long live humanity to understand Truth..





Smt. V. Jalaja Sakthidasan, M.A., M.Ed. Sangita Siromani is a noted writer. She has nearly 46 Titles to her credit. She is a Versatile Scholar and author of many books on religion in English, besides Tamil, Telugu and Hindi.

This book, 'The Great Yogeswara Yagnavalkya' published with the financial assistance of the Tirupati and Tirumala Devasthanams, is an interesting narrative of the life of the great sage, and throws light on the mettle of the great, dynamic personality.